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## PRESS RELEASE



# The Cleveland Museum of Art

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### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON ISAMU NOGUCHI

Isamu Noguchi was born in Los Angeles in 1904 to Yonejiro (Yone) Noguchi, a Japanese poet and Leonie Gilmour, an American writer. His father returned to Japan the same year and Noguchi and his mother followed in 1906. However, the couple soon separated and Noguchi grew up with his mother in the village of Chigasaki, seldom seeing his father. In Japan he attended Japanese and Jesuit schools.

In 1918 Noguchi was sent to Interlaken, an experimental school in Indiana that soon became an Army training camp. He was taken in by the school's founder Dr. Edward Rumely and graduated from the local high school. In 1923 he spent a three month apprenticeship with the sculptor Gutzon Borglum. He enrolled as a premedical student at Columbia University in 1923 and at the same time attended sculpture classes at the Leonardo da Vinci School. From 1923 to 1925 he sculpted skillful academic nudes and portraits which he exhibited.

He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1927 and went to Paris where he became Brancusi's studio assistant and made his first stone carving. In the years 1928 and 29 he produced a series of stone, wood, and sheet metal abstractions influenced by Brancusi and Picasso. He returned to New York in 1929 and exhibited his abstractions in his first one-man exhibition. He then produced a series of financially successful portrait busts.

In 1930 he went to Japan to work with the potter, Uno Jinmatsu. There he developed an interest in prehistoric Japanese art and traditional stone gardens. He returned to New York in 1931, producing numerous works and exhibiting frequently during the thirties and early forties. A number of unrealized projects were proposed during those years. After Pearl Harbor he spent a painful sojourn as a voluntary

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2-biographical information on isamu noguchi

internee at a camp for Nisei in the Arizona desert, building parks and playgrounds.

During the 1940s he made a number of stage sets for Martha Graham, and produced a series of interlocking sculptures. At this time he was somewhat influenced by Surrealism, especially through Roberto Matta. His stage set work continued in the 1950s and '60s as he began to work more with gardens, landscape projects, and large-scale public art. From these two decades come works such as the garden for the Readers Digest headquarters in Tokyo; his father's memorial room and garden at Keio University; the UNESCO gardens in Paris; the garden for the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale; the garden for the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; and the garden for the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York.

In the early '60s he established a studio, which he continues to use, in a small factory building in Long Island City, New York and in 1967 he began the practice of working in New York City, Japan, and Italy each year.

During the '70s Noguchi has been best known for his large outdoor sculptures; his playground in Atlanta; and designs for an eight acre plaza, fountain, and pylon in Detroit.

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For additional information, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.